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UNCLAS COLOMBO 001656

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [KWMN](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TIGERS DETAIN GSL CHILD PROTECTION  
POLICE; FUMBLE LAW ENFORCEMENT OPPORTUNITY

REF: COLOMBO 1610

1. (U) SUMMARY: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) police force detained three special policemen from the Government of Sri Lanka's (GSL) National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) on September 13 after the GSL officers crossed into LTTE-controlled territory in the north while pursuing a suspected foreign sex offender. Although the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) and UNICEF have intervened to push for the policemen's release, the LTTE maintains the three must remain in custody until a September 27 "trial" at LTTE headquarters in Kilinochchi. While there have been rare instances of the LTTE cooperating with GSL police in other criminal cases in the past, this recent debacle reflects the overall deterioration of GSL/LTTE relations, a breakdown exacerbated by the September 8 closure of LTTE political offices in GSL territory. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), UNICEF, the Roman Catholic Church and the GSL are urging the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to release three National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) officers detained on September 13 after they crossed into LTTE-controlled territory in the northern district of Mannar while pursuing a convicted UK sex offender. Unarmed and in civilian clothes, the officers, who were accompanied by two local Catholic priests and two female NCPA officers, were stopped at an LTTE checkpoint near a Tiger camp. (NOTE: Unlike the demilitarized zone of the Omantai crossing, Mannar district does not have a clearly-defined border between the GSL and LTTE lines. This "western front" has traditionally been less volatile than the north and east. END NOTE) While the priests were able to negotiate the release of the two female officers, their male colleagues were arrested and transferred to LTTE headquarters in Kilinochchi for "trial". The suspected sex offender, meanwhile, turned himself in to GSL authorities in Colombo on September 14 and faces arraignment on September 30.

3. (SBU) The LTTE has come under unaccustomed fire for the detentions from the SLMM, which has pressed LTTE political leader S. P. Tamilchelvan for the immediate release of the policemen. So far the LTTE has resisted such pressure, although it allowed SLMM officers to visit the three policemen in Kilinochchi to verify their well-being. SLMM spokesperson Helen Olafsdottir and UNICEF child protection officer Victor Nylund told poloff they believe the LTTE--which had coincidentally announced the formation of its own version of a child protection unit in its "police force" on September 7--realizes now it made a mistake in apprehending the policemen but can find no face-saving way to extricate itself. Olafsdottir and Nylund expect the LTTE will have a "show trial" on September 27 and release the officers thereafter.

4. (SBU) COMMENT: The GSL police and the LTTE have historically used the LTTE political offices as conduits for occasional, if infrequent, working level cooperation in handing over suspects fleeing GSL authorities. The September 8 closure of these offices (Reftel), however, has lessened the effectiveness of this potentially useful line of communications. The inability of the LTTE to work with the GSL to curb a suspected foreign pedophile is a reflection of just how far GSL-LTTE relations have deteriorated over the past few months.  
LUNSTEAD